



Media Release

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South Eastern Sydney Local Health District raises awareness of hepatitis

One in 12 people worldwide are living with hepatitis B or C. In Australia, hepatitis C affects more than a quarter of a million people, and only approximately 2,000 people (1% of those eligible) are currently undertaking hepatitis C treatment.

Hepatitis is a major risk to public health and despite the high prevalence of hepatitis B and C in the community, awareness of hepatitis remains relatively low. People living with the virus often experience difficulty in accessing the right kind of information and the help they need.

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District is joining forces with Hepatitis NSW and a host of local non-government organisations to educate the public about hepatitis and encourage those living with hepatitis to seek treatment.

Speaking at the launch of Hepatitis Awareness Week (21 – 28 July) at the Matthew Talbot Hostel, Woolloomooloo, today, Director of St George Hospital's Liver Clinic, Associate Professor Amany Zekry, said there is a continued need to reduce new infections and ensure that appropriate education, information and support is reaching those at risk.

"South Eastern Sydney Local Health District has some of the best hepatitis prevention, treatment and care services in NSW. We also work closely with our colleagues in general practice and in the community sector to provide high quality health care to those who need it," Professor Zekry said.

"While there is a vaccine for hepatitis B, there is no vaccine for hepatitis C. However, people living with the virus can make lifestyle choices to improve their quality of life and treatment has become more effective than ever before.

"This is why it is so important for people living with hepatitis to be supported in adopting healthy ways of living. These can include eating a balanced diet, reducing alcohol consumption, smoking less and reducing stress."

Hepatitis Awareness Week provides an opportunity for people to become better informed about the virus, consider ways they can be more aware of the needs of those living with hepatitis C and help to remove some of the stereotypes and misinformation that sometimes go hand in hand with hepatitis C.

"Awareness also encourages people to be tested for the virus and hopefully seek medical advice if they need it," Professor Zekry said.

People affected by hepatitis are urged to talk to their GP, contact Hepatitis NSW on 9332 1599 or visit www.hep.org.au.

Media please note: The launch of Hepatitis Awareness Week will be held on Monday 22 July, 2013, from 11am at the Matthew Talbot Hostel (Ozanam Learning Centre), 99 Forbes Street, Woolloomooloo.

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